

The Honorable Jean B. Cryor



Jean Brown was born in Darby, Pennsylvania, on December 13, 1938. She spent her childhood in Lansdowne, and attended the University of Pennsylvania. In 1959, she married Daniel J. Cryor (1933-1978) and worked as a reporter for the Philadelphia Bulletin in the early 1970s. Later, she worked in Philadelphia and Washington at the News Election Service, a media consortium reporting election data. She earned her MBA in 1979 from Loyola College in Baltimore.

Jean Cryor worked for the Gazette newspapers from 1987 to 1993, first as an editor and publisher and later as vice president of all of the Gazette newspapers. Her series of articles about sexual harassment within the Montgomery County Police Department was awarded First Prize for Investigative Reporting by the Maryland Society of Professional Journalists in 1993.

Cryor was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates in 1994 and served three terms from January 11, 1995, until January 10, 2007. She served as a member of the Ways and Means Committee, and several years as the Ranking Minority Member.

She served as a Member of the Task Force on Education Funding Equity, Accountability and Partnerships (1997-98); the Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence (1999-2002); the Task Force to Study College Readiness for Disadvantaged and Capable Students (2000-01); the Commission on Maryland's Fiscal Structure (2002-03); the Transportation Task Force (2003); the Virginia-Maryland-District of Columbia Joint Legislative Commission on Interstate Transportation (2003); the Task Force on Missing Vulnerable Adults (2004-05); and the Governor's Commission on Quality Education in Maryland (including the subcommittee on school readiness & early childhood programs) (2004-05).

Delegate Cryor served on the state's Thornton Education Commission and twice was the lead sponsor of a successful bill to suspend sales tax on clothing for Back-to-School Week. Her work on the Thornton Commission was tireless, as was her dedication to relieving families, veterans, and small businesses of the burdensome state taxes that hold back prosperity. She earned a reputation as a strong advocate for school funding, the earned income tax credit for low income workers, and for women's rights.

Cryor was fearless in her fight to protect the Potomac River. Her legislation protecting the Potomac River was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2005, the Maryland General Assembly passed a bill sponsored by Maryland State Senator Sharon Grosfeld to create a Pay Equity Commission to study the persistent gender-based wage gap in our state and make recommendations for possible remedies. The bill, long advocated by women's rights organizations was vetoed by the governor at that time. Women's rights groups rallied to overturn the veto. The legislators lined up along party lines. Only Jean Cryor dared to cross that line. She supported the veto override, voting against the governor and her own political party. At tremendous political risk, Delegate Cryor did what she believed was right.

The veto override was successful; the Pay Equity Commission eventually established, and its report and recommendations will no doubt benefit the women of Maryland and their families for generations to come.

In June 2007, Cryor was elected unanimously by the Montgomery County Council to the Montgomery County Planning Board where she developed a reputation for her astute questioning, broad interests and sense of humor. From 2007-2009, she also served as a Commissioner on the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and taught state and local government at Montgomery College.

Cryor was on several boards including the Black Rock Arts Center, the Jewish Foundation for Group Homes, the Convent of the Sacred Heart School in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, and the Potomac Theater Company. She served on the Executive Board of the Women Legislators of Maryland where she was president-elect (2003-04), and president (2004-05).

Cryor was honored with many awards over the course of her career. These included Citizen of the Year by the Almanac Newspapers, Legislator of the Year by the Maryland Retailers Association, Businessperson of the Year by the Maryland Businesses for Responsive Government, Building the Bridge to Excellence in Maryland Public Schools by the State Board of Education, Legislator of the Year by the Childhood Brain Tumor Foundation and Registry of Maryland, the Thornton Commission Award by the State Board of Education, Maryland's Top 100 Women by the Daily Record (2003 and 2006), the Woman of Achievement Award by the Suburban Maryland Business and Professional Women Association, and the Lifetime Service from the Potomac Chamber of Commerce.

Jean Cryor died of cancer at the age of 70, on November 3, 2009. She was an active member of the Maryland State Commission for Women at the time of her death.